

Gene Ethics Media Release 27 June 2016

GM-free Food and Crops: Election Scorecard

Gene Ethics posed 20 questions on Genetically Manipulated (GM) foods, seeds and sustainable farms to leading political parties. The scorecard shows The Greens and The Xenophon Team have better policies on GM-free and would deliver the real change that agriculture needs.

“The Greens were the only party that answered all our questions, and more,” says Gene Ethics Director Bob Phelps.

The Greens say that: “GMO assessments must be broad, independent and scientifically robust. Everyone has a right to know if foods contain any ingredients made using GM techniques, through the comprehensive labelling of those products.

Their concerns about the Trans Pacific Partnership deal include: “The inclusion of ISDS in recent trade agreements, such as the TPP, creates a ‘race to the bottom’ that will hinder Australia’s ability to maintain our comparative advantage of clean, high quality agricultural product.” They also oppose any agreement which would permit the Low Level Presence of unapproved GM contaminants in food shipments around the world as the TPP proposes.

In response to our concerns about the inadequacies of food regulation, The Greens: “support a review of FSANZ’s operations, (and) would consider options including suspending FSANZ’s operation, while ensuring that the best protection continues to be available to Australians.”

On Gene Ethics’ proposal for a Farmer Protection Fund paid for by levies on GM seed sales, The Greens say they: “would seek to develop an appropriate mechanism to fund contamination clean up, and compensating farmers,” after consulting all stakeholders.

We also applaud The Greens announcement of: “significant funding for investment in research and development and landcare, to improve the sustainability of the agriculture sector - <http://greens.org.au/innovative-ag>

The Xenophon Team told us: “Farmers and consumers should have the right to say no to GMOs” and that: “Government has a role to play in supporting continued research into the long-term unknown effects of GMOs on both human and plant health.”

Examples of their proposed actions include: “Ensure all GMO products are correctly labeled so consumers can make informed decisions,” and: “Protect farmers who want their crops to remain GMO-free by imposing stricter regulations and legal liability on the responsible for contamination.”

“The ALP reiterated their commitment to the present flawed regulatory regime and the Coalition did not reply despite our repeated efforts over the past month to elicit a response from both the Liberals and nationals,” Mr Phelps concludes.

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